

My name is Dawn McNary. I am the parent of a 4th Grader in East Haddam CT and a returning resident to the state of CT.

I am submitting testimony today in support of RH85562, Section 1, An Act Concerning Special Education. It is imperative that SLD-Dyslexia be recognized in the state of CT public school system. We can only expect our children to be properly identified and receive subsequent interventions once there is a recognition of the SLD-Dyslexia. However, in order to identify, intervene and recognize Dyslexia as a learning disability we must first start with education of our educators. Early intervention, in General Ed, is key to providing the tools our children need to be highly successful, confident members of their schools now and society down the road.

As a prior CT resident who has spent many of the last 20 years in Texas I have had the pleasure of having children educated in both CT and Texas over the years. It was in a town in Texas, Forney- about 20 miles East of Dallas, that I had the good fortune to run into a school district that was so far advanced in Dyslexia/Dysgraphia Identification and interventions that it is hard to accept anything less. The definition of Dyslexia and the process for identification dates back to the late 1990s in Texas. The education of educators has been going on for more than a decade now and the results are measurable. The definition of Dyslexia we worked under in my prior district were as follows :

As defined in TEC §38.003:

1. "Dyslexia" means a disorder of constitutional origin manifested by a difficulty in learning to read, write, or spell, despite conventional instruction, adequate intelligence, and sociocultural opportunity.
2. "Related disorders" includes disorders similar to or related to dyslexia such as developmental auditory imperceptions, dysphasia, specific developmental dyslexia, developmental dysgraphia, and developmental spelling disability.

The identification of difficulties was made by the classroom teacher. In our experience this was done as early as Spring of Grade 1. Yes Grade 1! The training for identification is not just for the Dyslexia specialist within the district, but rather for all classroom teachers. The goal being to look for and recognize key components that 'may' indicate a possible determination of Dyslexia as the cause. The goal being simple: get the teachers who are on the front lines day in and day out with the students to bring concerns relating

to perceived unexpected delays in learning to the attention of the Dyslexia professional and the parents. From this point a discussion would be had about possibility of screening and a full explanation was given as to what that screening would look like, who would be involved, and what options would be available based on results. The screening would be extensive and take place over many weeks and include everything from class room work and class room teachers' evaluation to parent questionnaires and IQ testing. Once the results were compiled all involved parties would meet and a plan of action would be put in place if it was warranted and if all parties were in agreement.

The definition of Dyslexia as a Specific Learning Disability and what that affords our young students with regard to accommodations, alternate learning and such is not clear in CT. This lack of clarity is causing great frustration on the part of all parties: School officials, Parents and Students. Dyslexia does not mean a child is incapable. Dyslexia does not mean a child cannot achieve. There are many myths about dyslexia and what a child with dyslexia looks like, acts like, writes like, talks like, or reads like. Myths should not be in the hands and minds of our educators, yet they are. Only education can change this issue. Only education can change the understanding about what is Dyslexia. The bill, RHB5562, is not perfect, there is room for change- enhancement- addition. However, this bill is the first step in a process that is a decade or more late in coming and cannot wait another day to begin.

Please support RHB5562 as a first step and if you feel so inclined make additions or amendments to it that will lead to better services for the students in our state.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

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